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TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PINR](#) [PREL](#) [KWMN](#) [KU](#)
SUBJECT: OUTLOOK BLEAK FOR NEW KUWAITI CABINET

REF: A. KUWAIT 621
[1](#)B. KUWAIT 633
[1](#)C. KUWAIT 1204

Classified By: Political Counselor Pete O'Donohue for
reasons 1.4 b and d

Summary

[1](#)1. (C) Kuwait's Amir swore in the latest iteration of his Cabinet on January 12 in a move that did little to reconcile the rift between his government and the obstreperous National Assembly. The new cabinet includes only two new names. FM Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al Sabah will serve as acting Oil Minister while the Amir and PM continue their so-far unsuccessful effort to find a qualified candidate willing to accept the job. Ten MPs demonstrated their disappointment with the appointments by staging a walkout during the swearing in portion of the January 13 scheduled parliamentary session. However, PM Shaykh Nasser Al Sabah's impassioned remarks condemning "Israeli aggression and massacres" in Gaza appeared to elicit a brief moment of consensus between government and parliament. End summary.

New Cabinet in Time for Arab Economic Summit

[1](#)2. (C) Due to growing pressure from Parliament, and facing the need to act in a time of economic crisis prior to the Kuwaiti-hosted January 19 Arab Economic Summit, Amir Shaykh Sabah al-Ahmad Al Sabah swore in on January 12 a new cabinet -- PM Shaykh Nasser's 5th since 2006 -- prior to the scheduled January 13 regular session of the National Assembly. The Amir had previously accepted the cabinet's resignation -- submitted November 25 after repeated calls by MPs to grill the PM -- on December 14. Constitutionally, the Amir was not immediately timebound to move on reinstating a cabinet, but parliament Speaker Jassem Al-Khorafi, among others, stated publicly that continued delays in re-establishing the executive body would create a "constitutional vacuum" in the country.

"Pitch Your Tents"

[1](#)3. (C) The outlook for an improvement in the poisonous relationship between parliament and government remains bleak. After the January 12 release of the names of the 'new' ministers -- only slightly different from the previous cabinet -- headlines proclaimed "pitch your tents," an offhand remark hinting at an imminent parliamentary dissolution and suggesting that MPs start campaigning, i.e. setting up their election tents, for the next parliamentary election. MPs, successful in forcing the previous cabinet to resign, were dismayed that there were only two new names

announced to head ministries: Roudhan Al-Roudhan (Health) and Nabil bin Salama (Communications, Electricity).

¶4. (C) Parliamentary reactions to this new cabinet formation have been negative, ranging from disappointment to cynical remarks suggesting that this was a government "designed for dissolution" (of the National Assembly). MPs made clear to the PM their disapproval of his choices when ten MPs, mostly Islamists, staged a walkout during the swearing-in of the new cabinet in the January 13 parliamentary session. (Note: Many of these same MPs previously walked out during the June 1 swearing-in of newly-appointed female minister, Dr. Moudhi Al-Hamoud, ref A. End note.)

Kuwaiti Oil Ministry: No Takers

¶5. (C) Particularly surprising was FM Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Al Sabah's acceptance of the Oil portfolio in an acting capacity. Apparently, this position went to the FM by default; the Amir/PM reportedly could find no takers for this particularly important, but perennially controversial, post. Former Oil Minister Mohammed Al-Olaime endured persistent criticism from MPs as well as the press over the GOK's support for the 4th Refinery Project and a USD 17 billion joint venture between state-owned Petrochemical Industries Company and Dow Chemical. MFA Follow-up and Coordination Department Director Ambassador Khaled Al-Muqamis told Econoff on January 13 that media mogul Jassem Al-Boodai, among others, was offered the Oil portfolio but turned it down at the last minute because he did not want to face constant pressure from MPs and critical press coverage, a common

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sentiment among other potential candidates. Muqamis also predicted a dissolution of parliament or another cabinet resignation within three months, another widely-shared sentiment and deterrent to aspiring GOK leaders.

PM Diverting Attention to Gaza

¶6. (C) In the January 13 sitting, the PM presented strong remarks promising governmental support and expecting parliamentary cooperation. He was uncharacteristically impassioned in front of parliament in his denunciation of the "barbaric massacres committed against our people" in Gaza and the declaration of Kuwaiti support for the implementation of UNSCR 1860. (Note: Arab FMs will informally consult in Kuwait on January 15, and officially meet on January 16 to propose measures to block continued Israeli "aggression" in Gaza. End note.) Also, Speaker Al-Khorafi announced an adjustment of the January 14 agenda to include a two hour debate on Gaza, and 21 MPs -- including gadfly Walid Al-Tabtabaei, who previously "offered his shoe" to Abu Mazen and wore a Palestinian solidarity stole in the January 13 session -- have declared their opposition to the entry of Palestinian Authority President Mahmoud Abbas into Kuwait for next week's Arab Economic Summit.

Composition of the New Cabinet

¶7. (C) No Change to Portfolios:
-- Shaykh Nasser Al-Mohammed Al-Ahmed Al Sabah, Prime Minister, ruling family
-- Shaykh Jaber Al-Mubarak Al-Hamad Al Sabah, First Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Defense, ruling family
-- Shaykh Jaber Al-Khaled Al-Jaber Al Sabah, Minister of Interior, ruling family
-- Shaykh Sabah Al-Khaled Al Sabah, Minister of Information, ruling family
-- Faisal Mohammed Al-Hajji Bou Khaddour, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of State for Cabinet Affairs (Liberal, Independent)
-- Mustafa Jassim Al-Shemali, Minister of Finance (Liberal,

Independent Shi'a)

-- Dr. Moudhi Al-Homoud, Minister of Housing and Minister of Administrative Development (liberal, participant in January 2008 POTUS women's roundtable)

-- Bader Al-Duwaila, Minister of Social Affairs and Labor (Al-Rashidi tribe, Independent Islamist)

-- Hussein Al-Huraiti, Minister of Justice and Minister of Awqaf and Islamic Affairs (Al-Azmi tribe, Independent Islamist, MP)

-- Ahmed Abdullah Al Baqer, Minister of Commerce and Industry and Minister of State for National Assembly Affairs (Member of Salafi Islamic Grouping political association)

-- Nouriyah Al-Sabih, Minister of Education and Minister of Higher Education (Technocrat, Independent, Liberal)

-- Fadhil Safar Ali Safar, Minister of Public Works and Minister of State for Municipal Affairs (Shi'a, National Islamic Alliance-NIA member)

New Ministers/Portfolios:

-- Shaykh Dr. Mohammed Sabah Al-Salem Al Sabah, Deputy Prime Minister and Minister of Foreign Affairs (no change), Acting Oil Minister, ruling family

-- Roudhan Al-Roudhan, Minister of Health (pro-government MP)

-- Nabil Khalaf Said bin Salama, Minister of Communications and Minister of Electricity and Water (Technocrat)

Ousted:

-- Mohammed Abdullah Al-Olaim, Minister of Oil and Minister of Electricity and Water (ICM, Al-Mutairi tribe)

-- Ali Mohammed Al-Barrak, Minister of Health (Al-Ajmi tribe)

-- Abdulrahman Al-Ghunaim, Minister of Communications (Independent, Pro-government)

Comment:

18. (C) The fact that a country dependent on oil cannot entice anyone to accept what by all rights should be a key leadership position testifies to the absolute lack of both coherence and leadership here. Political grandstanding by MPs accurately reflects the visceral impact of the Gaza situation but will not undermine the GOK's established support for Abu Mazen. End comment.

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